CHAPTER XII

LIFE IN LONDON" 1833-1834:

In *Endymion* we are shown the contrast between the social world of London as Disraeli first knew it in his youth and the same world as he saw it half a century later.

> The great world then, compared with the huge society of the present period, was limited in its proportions, and composed of elements more refined though far less various. . . . There were then, perhaps, more great houses open than at the present day, but there were very few little ones. The necessity of providing regular occasions for the assembling of the miscellaneous world of fashion led to the institution of Almack's, which died out in the advent of the new system of society, and in the fierce competition of its inexhaustible private entertainments. The season then was brilliant and sustained, but it was not flurried. People did not go to various parties on the same night. They remained where they were assembled, and, not being in a hurry, were more agreeable than they are at the present day. Conversation was more cultivated; manners, though unconstrained, were more stately; and the world, being limited, knew itself much better.[1]

On his return from the East Disraeli had, as we have seen, at once found admission to a society which if not the highest stood in close relationship to the highest — a curious blend of literature, fashion, politics, and

[1] *Endymion,* ch. 5.